

A SEBACEOUS CYST CONTAINING A COIL
OF HAIR CONSISTING OF TWO HAIRS,
EACH SEVERAL INCHES IN
LENGTH.*

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SEBACEOUS cysts containing fragments of hair are, it is true, not uncommon. Such cases have from time to time received passing notice from different observers, and are also incidentally mentioned in almost every text-book which treats of these tumors. Examples of this kind have come under my personal observation in the past few years. The hairs in these instances are usually found to be small and atrophied. The case under immediate notice was in this particular, however, decidedly curious, if not extraordinary. The cyst occurred in a medical gentleman, and the history of the case may be briefly sketched as follows:

About two years ago, in casually scratching the face, he noticed a small nodule at the point where the facial artery crosses the jaw. It appeared simply as a small indurated acne papule. As the parts were covered with a beard, and as the nodule consequently could not be seen, the attention given it was merely accidental. After a few months it

*Reprinted from the *Philadelphia Medical Times*, March 24, 1885.

grew somewhat larger and became slightly inflamed. On squeezing it, a cheesy substance was discharged. It then returned to its former condition, except that it was a trifle larger. It continued in a quiescent state for a few months, and then went through the same phases as before, becoming inflamed, enlarged, and on pressure discharging sebaceous matter. Thus it continued, at longer or shorter intervals, for a period of eighteen months, giving but little trouble, except when inflamed, and even then the annoyance was trifling. At the end of this period the tumor was about as large as a medium-sized pea, and very little above the level of the skin. About this time the gentleman shaved off his beard. The cyst immediately began to grow rapidly larger, and could be seen as an elevation with a small central depressed aperture, discharging at frequent intervals. Subsequently he introduced a pointed stick of nitrate of silver into the opening, and endeavored to cauterize it. Considerable inflammation ensued, and from a fourth to a half ounce of pus was discharged daily. The tumor was now about the size of a small marble, with considerable surrounding inflammation. After the inflammation had subsided somewhat, and about six months after the shaving off of the beard, the cyst was excised by Dr. Ashurst, of the University. The sac was bound down to the parts, so that in the removal it was necessary to take away some of the surrounding tissues. The cyst was subsequently opened, and, in addition to small quantities of sebum and pus, was found to contain a coil of hair, apparently made up of one hair, eleven or twelve inches in length. On lengthening it out for the purpose of obtaining measurement, the coil was found to consist of two hairs, one six inches in length and the other four inches and a half. The hairs were unattached.

The history of the case from the beginning is that of a simple discharging sebaceous tumor, becoming at times inflamed by the accumulated sebum. The

interest, of course, centres in the coil of hair and the solution of its presence there. The coil into which these hairs were wound was of the diameter of a little less than a-fourth of an inch, and appeared as if it had been made with the greatest care. As stated above, there was no attachment found, although the force necessary to enucleate would doubtless have severed any connection had such existed. It is rational to suppose that the hairs began to grow in the sac and coil themselves just after the shaving off of the beard. That such could not have taken place before this is shown by the small size of the cyst up to that time. After the shaving it is probable that the cyst, growing rapidly in size by extending at its circumference, carried in its under wall the hair-follicles with their inclosed bulbs. The hairs growing struck against the upper wall, and, being unable to penetrate, were reflected, and in that manner gradually wound themselves into the coil that was found enclosed. The hairs were good and strong and in no way atrophied, and appeared as if broken off near the roots. It is, moreover, probable that they were attached and growing up to the time of enucleation. This is rendered more likely by the fact that the hairs were of considerable length, and must necessarily have been growing several months,—fully as long as the time that elapsed between the shaving off of the beard and the excision of the tumor.

